



רודף שלום

May 11, 2007

Senator Gloria Romero
Chair of Senate Public Safety Committee
Attn: Mary Kennedy, Committee Staff
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916-445-0485

Re: Support for SB 511, 609 and 756

Dear Senator Romero:

On behalf of Congregation Rodef Shalom, I write to express support for SB 511 (requiring electronic recording of interrogations), SB 609 (requiring corroboration of evidence proffered by jailhouse informants), and SB 756 (requiring better guidelines for eyewitness identification procedures).

We are located in San Rafael, California, and are affiliated with the Union of Reform Judaism. Our congregation consists of almost 1200 families and nearly 4000 congregants in Marin County.

As you know, over the last few years, hundreds of convicted individuals throughout the country have been fully exonerated of the serious crimes for which they were convicted, usually through DNA evidence that did not surface until they had spent years, sometimes decades of incarceration. Unfortunately, such DNA and other forms of virtually foolproof evidence, are not available in most cases. We know that there must be hundreds or thousands of accused or already convicted Californians who are factually innocent, but will be or were unable to overcome less reliable evidence that suggests their guilt.

For us, this is a dilemma demanding of our attention. Whenever innocent people are wrongly convicted, not only are the true perpetrators of "their" crimes left free to commit more crimes against more victims, but we, as a society, have failed to satisfy our moral responsibility. We must insist that our system of justice does all that is reasonably possible to assure that criminal convictions cannot be based on unreliable or questionable evidence if more reliable proof was or could have been made available to prove the guilt or innocence of an accused individual. We are not "soft" on crime, but we are "hard" on justice.

We support the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice's unanimous recommendations for reforms that can prevent wrongful convictions in our state, and add the name of our Congregation to the growing list of individuals, religious organizations and other groups supporting these three bills, which represent a start. We urge their timely passage.

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Sincerely,

Leonard Rifkind,
President

cc: Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas via fax: 916-951-4026
Senator Elaine Alquist via fax: (916) 324-0283
California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice via fax:
(408) 554-5026
Francisco Lobaco, ACLU Legislative Office via fax (916) 442-1743

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